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EVOLVING ELDER CARE IN GHANA: THE ROLE OF SOCIAL WORK AMID CHANGING FAMILY DYNAMICS

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ABSTRACT: *Population aging is a universal phenomenon, with its implications reaching all corners of the globe. In Ghana, the growing population of older adults highlights the need for a robust and inclusive approach to social work that addresses their unique challenges. This paper explores the critical role of social workers in enhancing the lives of the elderly within the context of evolving family structures, limited resources, and systemic challenges. It examines traditional family support systems, geriatric social work, and global perspectives on elderly care, identifying lessons Ghana can adopt. The paper also discusses the challenges faced by social workers, including resource constraints, inadequate training, and systemic inefficiencies, and provides a comprehensive way forward. Emphasizing policy reforms, education, community engagement, technological innovations, and infrastructure investment, this paper outlines strategies to ensure that older adults in Ghana live with dignity, independence, and improved well-being.*

KEYWORDS: Social Work, Challenges, Support systems, Ageing, Older Adults, Ghana.

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INTRODUCTION

Population aging is an increasingly significant global phenomenon, and Ghana is no exception. By 2050, older adults are projected to constitute approximately two billion people worldwide (Kowal & Byles, 2015). In Ghana, the elderly population has experienced substantial growth, rising from 213,477 individuals (4.5%) in 1960 to nearly 2 million in 2021, representing a nearly tenfold increase over six decades (Ghana Statistical Service, 2021). Projections indicate that by 2050, older adults will comprise 9.8% of Ghana's total population (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2017). This demographic includes 861,830 males (43.3%) and 1,129,906 females (56.7%), with 59% residing in rural areas, where access to essential services is often limited.

While Ghana's elderly population is expected to rise to 9.8% by 2050, similar trends are observed across sub-Saharan Africa, where societal changes and health advancements are extending lifespans. The United Nations predicts that the population of older adults in sub-Saharan Africa will increase by an extraordinary 218% by 2050, surpassing the current numbers in regions with the highest elderly populations in 2019 (Kalu et al., 2021; Velkoff & Kowal, 2006). This regional context highlights the urgent need for robust elder care systems, both formal and informal.

While this growth reflects improvements in healthcare and living conditions, it also signifies a demographic shift characterized by declining birth rates and longer life expectancies (Ahmad et al., 2015; Kuzanashvili & Shioshvili, 2024). However, a growing elderly population also presents challenges. Many older adults in Ghana experience economic hardships and face physical and mental health issues, such as chronic illnesses and disabilities (Kwankye, 2013; Murphy et al., 2018). Addressing these vulnerabilities requires a concerted effort to provide adequate care and support to maintain their dignity, functionality, and well-being.

From time past, family members in Ghana have been the primary providers of care and support for older persons (Ofori-Dua, 2014). It is noted that this support is being provided to fulfil the principle of reciprocity; thus, they provide care and support to their older relatives since these relatives supported them when they were children (Brown, 2015). While some family members may assume the caregiving role to assist their older relatives in areas of their living, others provide financial support for the upkeep of older persons (Dovie, 2019). Evidence suggests that the traditional system of support for older persons is on the decline, driven by factors such as urbanization, the nucleation of families, international migration, lower birth rates, and longer lifespans (Dovie, 2019; Coe, 2018). These demographic and social shifts have sparked a national conversation about the future of elder care. Moreover, the few remaining family caregivers who provide salient support to enhance the livelihoods of older persons are liable to suffer certain economic and health burdens.

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CONTEXT AND TRENDS IN ELDER CARE

Population ageing in Ghana is not only a demographic reality but also a socioeconomic challenge influenced by broader global trends. The proportion of older adults has risen steadily, driven by advancements in healthcare, declining fertility rates, and increased longevity (Kpessa-Whyte, 2018). However, this demographic shift is creating new demands on families, communities, and the state.

Traditionally, elder care in Ghana has relied on extended family networks, deeply rooted in the cultural values of respect and reciprocity. Family members often provide practical, emotional, and financial support, viewing this responsibility as an obligation owed to older relatives who supported them in earlier years (Brown, 2015; Dovie, 2019). In rural areas, where the majority of older adults live, caregiving is typically informal and unstructured. Agyemang and Gyambiby (2025) highlight that weakened social networks among older individuals stem from various factors, including the impacts of urbanization and globalization. As younger generations increasingly migrate to urban centres, elderly family members are often left behind without adequate support (Agyemang & Tei-Muno, 2022).

The decline in traditional caregiving systems has placed significant economic and emotional burdens on the few remaining caregivers, often women (Nortey et al., 2017; Sanuade & Boatemaa, 2015). Studies reveal that caregiving costs in Ghana average $186.18 per month, representing a considerable financial strain for many families (Nortey et al., 2017). Caregivers also face health challenges, including stress, insomnia, and depression, further complicating their ability to provide consistent care (Van Exel et al., 2005; Van Wijngaarden, Schene, & Koeter, 2004).

Given the lack of adequate professional caregiving skills many of these family caregivers possess, the burdens associated with providing care to their care recipients could frustrate them and even compel them to perpetrate some form of abuse towards their older relatives. While family members play a pivotal role in enhancing the well-being of their older relatives, the gradual decline in services they provide to older persons suggests that familial support alone may be inadequate for older persons. Consequently, it is also essential to recognize the relevance of helping professionals in the lives of older persons. One notable group of professionals who are known for assisting vulnerable people to address their presenting problems and whose services are currently needed to advance the interests of older people and their caregivers in Ghana are social workers.

TRADITIONAL FAMILY SUPPORT FOR THE ELDERLY

Elderly care is a global concern, with nations worldwide contending with the complexities of aging populations (Rahman, 2019; Sciegaj & Behr, 2010). The strategies adopted to address the needs of older adults are shaped by cultural, economic, and policy contexts, reflecting variations in societal norms, resource availability, and demographic transitions. In this context, traditional family support systems remain pivotal, rooted in intergenerational reciprocity, where older generations receive care in recognition of their past contributions to the family and society (Albertini et al., 2007).

In many Asian societies, particularly Japan and China, the principle of filial piety underscores the obligation of children to care for their aging parents. This deeply ingrained cultural value

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has historically provided a reliable safety net for older adults (Cheung & Kwan, 2009). A study by Serrano et al. (2017) on filial support laws in four Asian countries found that countries have developed filial-support laws as a way to address the needs of aging populations and changing cultural values. These filial-support laws create a legal obligation for adult children to financially support their aging parents who cannot support themselves. Similarly, Kudo (2024) examines Japan's unique blend of family caregiving and formalized eldercare systems, showcasing how historical and societal values shape its long-term care models.

Conversely, Western societies, including Europe and North America, have shifted towards institutional care models. These systems, while emphasizing professionalized elder care, reflect the evolving dynamics of family structures and workforce demands (Albertini et al., 2007; Spillman & Pezzin, 2000). Developed nations like Japan, Sweden, and the United States have implemented structured systems, such as Japan's *Long-Term Care Insurance* and Sweden's universal elder care programs, to address the needs of their aging populations (Chen et al., 2020; Joshua, 2017; Myers et al., 1990). The integration of structured systems like Medicare in the U.S. has alleviated the caregiving burden on families, as discussed by McCormack et al. (2024).

In Ghana and across many sub-Saharan African nations, families serve as the primary caregivers and sources of support for the elderly (Gurayah, 2015; Ghana Statistical Service, 2010; Van der Geest, 2016). Elderly care in many societies has traditionally relied on informal family support systems deeply rooted in cultural norms and values (Apt, 2002). This support is often characterized by being material in nature but also unstructured, irregular, and frequently insufficient. It may come with conditions, be available only seasonally, or, in some cases, be entirely absent (Darteh et al., 2014; Ndubajam et al., 2023). These systems emphasize deep respect for elders and the principle of reciprocity, where caring for aging relatives is considered both a moral obligation and a way of honoring the support they provided in earlier years (Deku et al., 2021). This cycle of reciprocity fosters a system where individuals anticipate receiving care in their later years, an observation well-documented in research by Brown (2015), Ofori-Dua (2014), and Van der Geest (2002). Olivier et al. (2008) highlight that the core values underpinning these non-formal caregiving systems include self-help, inherent solidarity, contribution obligation, and entitlement. These values are not only central to caregiving but are also socially and culturally determined, reflecting the collective ethos of many traditional societies. Together, these principles ensure that elder care is viewed as an integral and honorable responsibility within the family and community.

Similarly, a study by Ezulike et al. (2024) explored the motivations of older adults in Nigeria for providing informal caregiving to other aging individuals. The findings revealed that caregiving was driven by factors such as reciprocity of kindness, altruism, a sense of moral responsibility, and a desire for peaceful longevity. These motivations were deeply influenced by underlying cultural and religious values. Family caregiving often encompasses emotional, financial, and practical assistance, ensuring that older adults can remain within their communities—a preference seen as both dignified and culturally aligned (Abekah-Carter et al., 2022; Abdullah et al., 2020; Awuviry-Newton et al., 2021a).

However, these traditional caregiving systems are increasingly under strain like many African countries. Urbanization, socioeconomic development, and globalization have altered family structures and reduced the capacity of extended families to serve as robust safety nets for the

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elderly (Dovie, 2019; Kpessa-Whyte, 2018). Younger generations, often migrating to urban centers in search of better opportunities, leave behind gaps in caregiving responsibilities. Hence, Aboderin (2004) argued that the decline in material family support for older people in Ghana has been driven by a declining resource capacity of the young to provide support and a shift toward filial support based more on reciprocity rather than duty. As noted by Agyemang and Tei-Muno (2022), this erosion of extended family networks is a direct challenge to the historically communal approach to elder care, as the burden of caregiving often falls on female family members, creating significant economic and emotional strain (Kwankye, 2013).

Similarly, Essuman and Mate-Kole (2021) and Kpessa-Whyte (2018) highlight that these demographic shifts weaken the ability of families to provide consistent emotional and financial support. Nortey et al. (2017) estimated the economic burden of family caregiving for the elderly in Southern Ghana, uncovering significant financial and emotional challenges. The study found that caregiving costs averaged US$186.18 per month, with 66% of expenses being direct costs like medical bills and transportation, highlighting the financial strain on families. Additionally, 78% of caregivers reported significant stress, with women experiencing disproportionately higher burdens than men, reflecting the gendered nature of caregiving. Furthermore, 87% of caregivers faced severe financial stress due to caregiving duties, underscoring the dual economic and emotional toll on families. For elderly women, Sossou and Yogtiba (2015) noted that the breakdown of traditional family support systems is a major factor affecting their welfare as elderly women in Ghana face pervasive poverty, illiteracy, widowhood, and subjection to harmful cultural practices and beliefs. According to Coe (2021), the breakdown of the traditional family-based care systems is causing anxiety among older adults about potential neglect by their families, rather than feeling secure in their care.

These challenges are not peculiar to Ghana and many other African countries. For instance, in China, the demands of modernization and urbanization have created gaps in eldercare, as described by Yan (2024). During the COVID-19 pandemic, restrictions in community-based care further exacerbated these issues. Greenberg et al. (2020) noted that the COVID-19 pandemic restrictions posed significant challenges for community-dwelling caregivers and people with dementia, including disrupted routines, lack of structure, decreased access to respite care, and new or worsening safety issues.

The shifting dynamics of Ghanaian society are leading to adaptations in elder care practices especially in the urban settings. Driven by transnational migration and increased financial resources among the middle class, there is the rise of commercial nursing services (Coe, 2017). A study by Dakpui et al. (2024) assessed households' willingness to pay for formal residential care for the elderly in urban Ghana. The findings revealed that approximately 72% of households expressed a willingness to pay for such services, with an average monthly contribution of US$122.35 (ranging from US$27.30 to US$272.70). This highlights a significant potential market for formal elderly care services in urban areas of the country.

The changing landscape of rural caregiving also reflects a broader societal transition, where modern pressures and evolving norms are threatening traditional care arrangements. Agyemang & Tei-Muno (2022) and Owusu & Baidoo (2020) emphasize that this transformation risks isolating older adults, who may experience inadequate support as families struggle to balance traditional responsibilities with contemporary demands. Addressing these challenges requires a dual approach: preserving the cultural heritage of elder care while developing formal systems

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to complement and enhance these traditional structures. This nuanced strategy is critical for ensuring that Ghana's ageing population receives the comprehensive support they need in an era of rapid social change.

SOCIAL WORK AND GERONTOLOGICAL SOCIAL WORK

Social work is a professional discipline dedicated to improving the well-being of individuals, families, and communities through advocacy, empowerment, and support services. Rooted in principles of social justice, human rights, and respect for diversity (International Federation of Social Workers [IFSW], 2014), social work embodies values that align closely with Ghana's cultural ethos of collectivism and shared responsibility. Globally, social workers are recognized for their contributions to improving the living conditions of vulnerable populations (Baffoe & Dako-Gyeke, 2014; Naami et al., 2022).

In Ghana, traditional support systems such as extended families and local community networks have historically served as the primary means of care for individuals in need, long before formalized social work was introduced (Avendal, 2011). These systems reflect deeply rooted values of reciprocity, collectivism, and shared responsibility (Owusu, 2021; Naami & Mfoafo-M'Carthy, 2023), where individuals often seek help first from family, friends, and community groups before turning to professional services (Golan, 1980). This collectivist ethos is particularly evident in rural areas, where the extended family system provides essential social welfare functions, including parenting, kinship support, and mutual caregiving (Owusu, 2021). However, the erosion of these traditional systems due to urbanization, migration, and changing family structures has created significant gaps in elder care, emphasizing the need for professional social work interventions (Dovie, 2019; Coe, 2018).

Within the broader practice of social work, gerontological social work has emerged as a vital specialization to meet the unique needs of an aging population. Aging is a multidimensional process encompassing biological, psychological, and social changes, each requiring tailored interventions. Gerontological social work focuses on empowering older adults to live independently with dignity while addressing challenges such as frailty, financial insecurity, and social isolation (Wiles, 2001; Popli & Panday, 2018).

In Ghana, where the number of older adults is projected to rise to 9.8% of the total population by 2050 (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2017), gerontological social work is increasingly critical. Traditional caregiving systems are under strain, with urbanization and international migration reducing the capacity of families to care for older relatives (Agyemang & Tei-Muno, 2022). Gerontological social workers play a pivotal role in bridging these gaps by supporting older adults and their families through transitions, alleviating caregiving stress, and addressing end-of-life needs. Their work also encompasses advocacy against systemic issues like ageism, limited healthcare access, and socio-economic disparities that disproportionately affect the elderly (Wiles, 2001). Their dedication makes gerontological social work an essential part of meeting the unique needs of an ageing population (Ray et al., 2015).

Programs such as "Opening Minds Through Art," which foster social connection through creative expression, exemplify how gerontology-focused interventions can enhance the well-being of older adults. These initiatives, adapted to Ghana's unique socio-cultural context, could provide innovative solutions to the challenges of elder care (Elliot & Abbott, 2024). As

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technological advancements reshape healthcare, social workers can also champion the integration of telemedicine and digital tools to improve elder care, particularly in rural areas.

THE ROLE OF SOCIAL WORKERS IN ELDER CARE IN GHANA

The role of social workers in enhancing the lives of older persons is pivotal, particularly in a society where older adults often face vulnerabilities arising from social, economic, and health disparities. Guided by principles of service, social justice, and human dignity (National Association of Social Workers, 2017), social work professionals in Ghana bring their theoretical knowledge and practical expertise to address the challenges faced by marginalized older persons, ensuring they live dignified and fulfilling lives. As noted by Deku et al. (2021), the overarching goal of social work is to help communities thrive and support their members, including older adults, while striving to uphold human dignity, promote self-determination, and ensure that older adults maintain a decent standard of living (Scharlach, 2015).

The growing strain on traditional caregiving systems has highlighted the need for social workers to address critical gaps. In healthcare settings, they provide counselling, conduct bio-psychosocial assessments, and advocate for patient-centred care strategies, ensuring that older adults receive appropriate treatment (Awuviry-Newton et al., 2021). Their advocacy extends to the development of care strategies, ensuring that treatment plans align with patients' needs and that policies supporting subsidized healthcare are implemented (Kodom, 2022). Moreover, social workers often serve as intermediaries, assisting older persons in navigating systems such as the National Health Insurance Scheme to access subsidized healthcare (Duku et al., 2015). Social workers also play an essential role in facilitating access to government programs such as the National Health Insurance Scheme and the Livelihood Empowerment Against Poverty (LEAP) initiative, which provide financial and healthcare support to marginalized older adults (LEAP Programme Ghana, 2017).

Beyond direct interventions, social workers advocate for systemic changes to address the disparities faced by the elderly, particularly in areas such as financial insecurity and community-based care. For instance, they champion inclusive policies that mitigate economic challenges and support ageing in place—a concept where older adults continue to live in their communities with access to necessary resources (Black, 2008). These efforts are especially relevant in Ghana, where most older adults prefer community-based care over institutionalized settings (Crampton, 2011).

A study by Awuviry-Newton et al. (2025) highlighted the critical role social workers can play in addressing financial insecurity among older adults in Ghana. The study noted that "social workers could play a crucial role in providing support and advocacy to improve the financial security status and quality of life of older people" (p. 225). It further argued that social workers can establish financial capability and asset-building (FCAB) initiatives, empowering older adults to make informed and financially sound decisions. These systemic advocacy efforts by social workers are essential to ensuring older adults live with dignity and independence, despite the economic challenges they face.

In the context of Ghana's evolving family structure, social workers are instrumental in strengthening informal and community-based support systems for older adults. They advocate for policies and interventions that enable older persons to access home care services and community-based programs (Cheung & Ngan, 2005; Crampton, 2011). When institutionalized

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care becomes necessary, social workers play a vital role in ensuring ethical practices and the recruitment of qualified caregivers. Their focus on maintaining professional standards safeguards the well-being and dignity of older adults in care facilities.

The contributions of social workers extend beyond individual interventions to the societal level. Social workers help build a society that values all generations through the advocacy of age-inclusive policies. Their work emphasizes the interconnectedness of generations and promotes social cohesion, reinforcing the idea that the well-being of older adults is integral to the health of the entire community (Gough et al., 2021).

CHALLENGES IN SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE IN GHANA

Social work is uniquely positioned to address the challenges faced by ageing populations. However, Ghana, like many countries, struggles to equip its social workers with the necessary resources and support to meet the needs of older adults. This issue is not unique to Ghana; as Rosen and Zlotnik (2001) highlight, social work globally faces a shortage of professionals with competence in geriatric care, leaving the profession underprepared to meet the demands of an ageing society (Scharlach et al., 2000).

First of all, Ghana's multi-ethnic society and diverse cultural practices can limit access to social work interventions. A review conducted by Owusu (2021) on the challenges of contemporary social work in Ghana found that the extended family system, while beneficial in some respects, can also restrict vulnerable individuals from receiving necessary help due to cultural norms and expectations. Additionally, certain cultural practices perpetuate social challenges and create barriers to effective social work. These situations often require social workers to navigate the delicate balance between respecting cultural traditions and advocating for fundamental human rights (Ayim et al., 2021).

A persistent challenge for social workers in Ghana stems from inadequate budget allocations for social services. The Ghanaian Department of Social Welfare faces severe underfunding, significantly hindering its ability to carry out essential social work functions. This chronic lack of resources not only limits the department's capacity but also weakens its oversight of NGOs, potentially compromising accountability within the social sector (Laird, 2008). Research conducted by Awuviry-Newton et al. (2021) found that social workers' efforts are hampered by inadequate resources for working with older adults and their caregivers. The general decline in social welfare funding across Africa has left many social workers unable to access basic tools essential for their work. According to Okoye, Ebimgbo, and Ene (2017), the absence of offices, telephones, computers, and reliable transportation significantly hampers their ability to deliver services effectively. Without such basic infrastructure, social workers are unable to conduct home visits, coordinate community interventions, or maintain timely communication with their clients. This lack of material and financial resources undermines their capacity to address critical social issues, including those affecting older adults.

The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated existing challenges in Ghana’s social work sector, forcing practitioners to adapt their methods in unprecedented ways. Social workers pivoted to promoting kinship care as an alternative to direct interventions, recognizing the importance of familial and community support systems during times of restricted mobility and limited access to resources (Cudjoe & Abdullah, 2020). However, the pandemic also stressed the deficiencies in Ghana’s geriatric care infrastructure. The country lacks adequate geriatric facilities and data,

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hindering healthcare provision for older adults (Dovie, 2019). Ghana's healthcare sector faces challenges in accessibility, workforce, funding, and infrastructure, which impede effective pandemic response (Dzando et al., 2021). As Deku et al. (2021) note, the crisis highlighted the urgent need for comprehensive geriatric-focused social work practices and policies to ensure the well-being of older adults during emergencies. For Hamenoo, (2024), the COVID-19 pandemic has further exacerbated these challenges, with social workers noting increased economic hardship and inadequate state support for their clients.

The lack of specialized education in geriatric social work is a significant barrier to addressing the needs of Ghana's ageing population. Higher education institutions in Ghana have not prioritized gerontological studies, leaving a gap in the training of future social workers (Asante & Karikari, 2021). This gap has direct implications for the geriatric workforce, as professionals without adequate knowledge of ageing-specific issues are ill-equipped to provide holistic care for older adults. The absence of geriatric-focused curricula contributes to a cycle of unpreparedness, where the workforce remains insufficiently skilled to meet the demands of an ageing population.

The challenges facing social workers in Ghana reflect broader systemic issues that hinder the development of effective social services. Limited resources, compounded by insufficient training and the absence of robust geriatric care policies, leave vulnerable populations, including older adults, without adequate support. Addressing these issues requires coordinated efforts, including increased budgetary allocations, investment in infrastructure, and the development of gerontology-focused educational programs.

INNOVATIVE APPROACHES AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Ghana, like many other countries, faces the realities of an aging population that demands a multifaceted and sustainable response. Challenges in elderly care are compounded by changing family structures, limited resources, and the absence of adequate geriatric services. While traditional family support systems remain vital, urbanization and globalization are straining their capacity. Addressing these challenges requires a comprehensive approach combining modern interventions with reinforcing cultural values to enhance social work for the elderly.

Strengthening Policy Frameworks

The foundation of any effective system of care lies in sound policies. While Ghana has taken steps to support its elderly population, significant gaps remain in policy implementation and program reach. Strengthening legislative frameworks to protect older adults from abuse, neglect, and discrimination is crucial. For example, aligning national policies with international guidelines, such as the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing, can provide a robust framework for action. Expanding social protection programs like the Livelihood Empowerment Against Poverty (LEAP) initiative is equally important, ensuring that financial assistance reaches a larger segment of the aging population. Moreover, there must be mechanisms to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of these programs, promoting transparency and accountability.

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Investing in Gerontological Education and Training

Secondly, education and training in gerontological social work are indispensable for improving elderly care. Social workers, as frontline providers of support, require specialized knowledge to address the complex needs of older adults. Unfortunately, the absence of gerontology-focused curricula in Ghana's higher education institutions limits the preparedness of future social workers. Introducing courses that cover the social, psychological, and biological aspects of ageing would bridge this gap. Beyond formal education, continuous professional development through workshops, certifications, and seminars can equip practicing social workers with up-to-date skills. Additionally, public awareness campaigns on ageing issues can foster greater understanding and reduce societal stigma. Ghana can build a competent workforce capable of addressing the unique challenges of an ageing population by investing in education

Reinforcing Family and Community Support Systems

In addition, family and community support systems, once the bedrock of elderly care in Ghana, need reinforcement to adapt to modern realities. Intergenerational programs that connect younger and older generations can revitalize familial bonds and reduce the social isolation often experienced by older adults. For instance, storytelling sessions or mentorship initiatives can foster mutual respect and understanding across age groups. Providing resources and financial support to family caregivers is equally important to alleviate the economic and emotional burdens they face. Furthermore, community-based interventions, such as volunteer networks, can complement family efforts by offering companionship and practical assistance to elderly individuals. Strengthening these traditional support systems is essential to preserve Ghana's cultural heritage while addressing contemporary challenges.

Investing in Geriatric Infrastructure

Furthermore, investment in geriatric infrastructure is another critical aspect of the way forward. The establishment of geriatric care centers, offering medical, psychological, and recreational services, would address the varying needs of older adults. For those who prefer to age in place, expanding home-care services is a practical solution that promotes independence and comfort. Technology can also play a transformative role in elderly care. Telemedicine, for example, can bridge the gap in healthcare access, especially for older adults in remote areas. Assistive devices and digital platforms can further enhance the quality of life for the elderly by enabling them to manage their health and daily activities more effectively. Adequate infrastructure, therefore, is a key enabler of comprehensive and accessible elder care.

Fostering Collaborative Efforts

Finally, a collaborative approach involving multiple stakeholders is essential for addressing the complexities of elderly care. Partnerships between the government, non-governmental organisations, academia, and the private sector can pool resources and expertise to develop innovative solutions. International collaborations can also provide valuable insights, drawing lessons from countries with advanced elder care systems, such as Japan or Sweden. Moreover, preparing for emergencies, such as pandemics, that disproportionately affect older populations is critical. Crisis response plans should prioritise the elderly, ensuring their safety and well-being during times of upheaval.

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CONCLUSION

The increasing population of older adults in Ghana presents both opportunities and challenges for social work. As traditional family support systems become strained under the pressures of urbanization and globalization, the role of social workers becomes ever more critical. This paper underscores the importance of a multifaceted approach to elderly care that blends cultural values with modern solutions. Strengthened policies, specialized education, geriatric infrastructure, and advocacy for inclusive environments are essential to addressing the complex needs of older adults. Drawing lessons from global models and leveraging Ghana's unique cultural strengths, the nation can create a comprehensive framework that safeguards the dignity, well-being, and independence of its elderly population. Collaboration among stakeholders and a commitment to continuous improvement will ensure that Ghana's social work sector is prepared to meet the demands of an aging society while fostering intergenerational solidarity and social cohesion.

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